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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

Fourteenth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 265th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 18 January 1995, at 3.15 p.m.

Chairperson: Ms. CORTI

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The meeting was called to order at 4.35 p.m.

IMPLEMENTATION OF ARTICLE 21 OF THE CONVENTION

CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE COMMITTEE TO INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES

1. Ms. TAMZALI (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) recalling the offer made at the previous session to place UNESCO resources at CEDAW's disposal in order to prepare a study dealing with article 10 of the Convention, drew attention to the informal document which was being circulated. She hoped that the document, which had been prepared by a joint UNESCO/CEDAW group would be regarded as an authoritative text on women's education. If it proved acceptable to CEDAW, it would be circulated at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. Even if the Committee did not accept the document the cooperation between the two bodies would still have been valuable because UNESCO intended to circulate the document internally and use it as a basis for future programmes of action. It also planned to publish the document so that it could serve as the basis for a round table to be organized at Beijing to promote gender equality.

2. She also drew attention to document CEDAW/C/1995/3/Add.3 containing the report submitted by UNESCO, particularly to Part One, chapter II, which dealt with the use of rape as a weapon of war. UNESCO's objective in submitting the report was to assist the Committee in its task of monitoring the Convention and to provide statistical data on women's education in the various States parties.

3. The CHAIRPERSON said that the draft document referred to by UNESCO represented an excellent starting-point for further exploration of the issue of women's education and that the proposed round table in Beijing would be a valuable opportunity to publicize the Committee's work. She suggested that the document should be referred to Working Group II.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

4. Ms. TALLAWY said that the number of reports considered by the Committee at one session should be reduced in order to ensure quality.

5. Ms. BERNARD cautioned that such a measure should not be taken until the Secretariat had provided a complete list of reports pending consideration.

6. Ms. SINEGIORGIS agreed with Ms. Tallawy that more time should be devoted to the consideration of each State party's report. The fact that CEDAW was allotted a comparatively short time to handle the same volume of work as other treaty bodies was tantamount to a form of discrimination. Women typically felt compelled to work exceptionally hard but, in fact, a committee composed of women should not have to work at a more rapid pace than any other committee. The heavy programme of work meant that there would be very little time left to examine the draft optional protocol to the Convention. She proposed that the Committee should consider no more than seven or eight reports in the three weeks allotted to it.

7. Ms. GARCÍA-PRINCE supported the statement made by Ms. Sinegiorgis.

8. Ms. CARTWRIGHT also supported the comments made by Ms. Sinegiorgis. The extent to which the number of reports should be reduced should be determined on the basis of information provided by the Secretariat concerning the number of reports pending consideration.

9. Mr. MATHIASON (Deputy Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women) confirmed that the Committee considered between 8 and 14 reports each session. The list of States whose reports had been submitted but not yet considered was contained in document CEDAW/C/1995/6 (annex IV); additional reports had been received since the publication of the document. It was true that, in an effort to complete its work on schedule, the Committee had to devote less time than other similar bodies to the consideration of each report. The General Assembly had requested States parties to the Convention to meet in 1995 in order to review the meeting time provided for in the Convention.

10. Ms. SCHÖPP-SCHILLING, Rapporteur, supported the remarks made by Ms. Sinegiorgis. She would ensure that the list of reports for consideration by the Committee in 1996 was shorter. She noted that, even though its workload was heavier in anticipation of the Fourth World Conference on Women, the Committee had not been allotted extra meeting time.

11. The CHAIRPERSON, speaking in her personal capacity, confirmed that, based on her observation of the proceedings of other treaty bodies, CEDAW had a heavier workload than any other human rights committee. That was partly attributable to its Convention, the only one to impose a limit on meeting time. The fifth meeting of persons chairing human rights treaty bodies had expressed concern about the Committee's inability to discharge its work during the meeting time available to it (A/49/537, annex, para. 49) and yet, during the session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Finnish representative had proposed that CEDAW should extend its annual session by one week rather than convene twice a year. Even so it had required 10 days of discussion before a decision was taken. Perhaps the entire issue of meeting time should be raised during the meeting of States parties, requested by the General Assembly, which would take place in May.

12. Ms. SINEGIORGIS, supported by Ms. BUSTELO GARCIA DEL REAL, Ms. AYKOR and Ms. TALLAWY, suggested that the Chairperson should represent the Committee at the meeting of States parties to the Convention to be held in May 1995.

13. It was so decided.

14. Ms. CARTWRIGHT noted with regret that the representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines had not been able to appear before the Committee to submit their combined first, second and third periodic reports as required under Rule 49 of the rule of procedure. She suggested that, given the limited time available, the Committee might wish to consider the possibility of taking up the report in the absence of the State party's representative. Rule 55 of the rules of procedure allowed for the suspension of any rule by a decision of a two-thirds majority, and its application in that case would not create a precedent.

15. Ms. SINEGIORGIS suggested that the Committee should first contact the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to learn why their representatives had been unable to appear.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.